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Belles Lettres

*Eastern Kentucky
State College*

RICHMOND, KENTUCKY

1954-1955

Belles Lettres

An annual anthology of student writing sponsored and published by the
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at Richmond, Kentucky.

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FOREWORD

This 1955 volume of BELLES LETTRES has been prepared with three aims in mind: to include as many different kinds of writings as possible, to include the writings of as many students as possible, and at the same time to maintain as high a literary standard as possible.

The editor and the staff of BELLES LETTRES wish to present this twenty-first volume with an expression of gratitude to its readers and to its contributors, who make this publication possible, and with a hope that it has achieved its aims and that it merits the continued interest of the public.

A MEDITATION ON THE RAIN

DIANA MILLER

Rain is one of the most beautiful phenomena of nature. It can be like a cool sheet of metal that makes you want to lean your forehead against it to draw strength from its restive powers. At times, it is like a soft, wispy veil with which the entire universe has robbed itself. Then you want to push it aside to peer at half-hidden wonders. Sometimes the rain is angry and looks like slender, slivery-gray eels twisting and turning in the space between heaven and earth. Perhaps rain is most beautiful when it is no longer silver and gray, but when the sun is directly behind it, radiating aureolas of red, gold, and sapphire.

Yet, in spite of all of its beauty and splendor, I hate the rain. It keeps me cooped up in the house for days when I yearn to run through a green field letting the wind caress my hair and wish to play, sing, dance, and laugh. I, who love the sun on my back and the cloudless blue sky, must sit inside playing checkers, watching the water stream down the window-panes, and listening to the monotonous clamor of the raindrops pattering on the roof and spattering on the streets outside.

Rain is an inconvenience in other ways. The ground becomes muddy and wet and I ruin a good pair of shoes. I have to carry a portable roof, and I always leave it some place and then have to search for it. If I decide to wear galoshes, I have to rise ten minutes earlier in the mornings to get them to fit over my shoes. I have to wear a raincoat even in the summertime. The water drips off the bottom of it into my shoes. My hair becomes limp and damp and droops into my eyes. I look and feel bedraggled.

I dislike rain because of what it does to people. They become impatient and restless. They are irritable and peevish. Their viewpoint on life becomes shadowed by pessimism. People don't laugh and smile very much when it rains. They lose their gaiety and joyousness and become morose and downcast. The clouds that come with the rain put clouds on the spirit.

All bad things seem to happen when it rains. Cars collide on slick roads and people die. Persons tumble down wet steps and break their legs. Rain is for funerals and murder. More people commit suicide when it rains.

Although I despise rain and its immediate effects, I realize that when it is viewed from its every angle, it is really a blessing in disguise. Because of rain, I am able to run through the green meadow and enjoy the beauties of the sunny, spring day. The rain is converted into gurgling brooks which sing gaily as they dance down the hillside. It enables the flowers to display themselves proudly in all their glory. It makes the corn grow tall and straight in the field. It puts the freshness in the breeze and even provides the way by which I quench my thirst. Rain disciplines me so that I may endure the sad and, through that discipline, makes me more appreciative of the happy.

DAY

RUTHIE PATTERSON

As the purple curtains of morning
Push the shade out and away,
I look out of my window
And call to the infant day.
Because there's so much to be done
I wish to do all if I may,
But if I can't, I'll not worry,
God will send another day.

THE TRIUMPH

MARY MCCALL

A train thunders past.
Its sound becomes so vociferous that
I feel it is rushing straight at me—
That it will crumple my body.
Listen! The sound fades;
It is almost gone.
Slowly, surely the train goes its way.
It picks up speed and rushes on—away from me.

But I hear it still.
Will it ever leave?
Listen; it is hardly audible.
Ah, now some other noise drowns out that of the blatant train.

For a moment I am distracted.
When I turn my attention again to the train,
Its sound is very faint.
I hear it no more.
Is it gone?
Yes, yes, oh, yes!
It is gone.

The other noise attracted my attention.
So intently did my mind fix on it
That the spell was broken.
My trepidation is no more.

As Satan's turbulent thunder roars about me,
I feel that he is coming straight to me—
That he will crush me.
He creeps back into the shadows—
Fading, but not completely from sight.
He picks up momentum and turns, supposedly, from me.

Still he lingers—will he ever leave?
Look! He is hardly noticeable.
Another—God—draws my attention.
For a moment I am overwhelmed by His presence.
He reassures me and I know I am safe when He is near.

Satan rushes away.
I see him no more.
Is he—is he gone?
Yes, oh, yes! He is gone.
God is here

BEFORE THE END

RUTHIE PATTERSON

Many friends and much delight,
Bright clear days and starry nights;
Love and health and joy and cheer,
Faith to last me all the years;
Prayer and life all in one,
Desire and seeking to be won;
I ask the Maker these things to send
Before He says, "Come, 'tis the end."

AFTER RAIN

ANN HELMAN

I think that after it has rained,
And all the world is pure again,
And all the birds so gladly sing,
And calls of frogs around you ring;
I think if I were not aware,
If these grand things I could not share
With other ones who have their sight,
And ones to whom it's not always night;
To those who hear these little calls,
To whom life's not a vacuumed hall;
I think that I would be missing life,
Although mine's one that's filled with strife;
And though I neither hear nor see,
These little things are clear to me.

THORNS HAVE ROSES

BARBARA E. WHITE

It isn't so much the way things are
As the way we look at a thing.
There's always the note of a merry song
For the voice that is ready to sing.
And "roses have thorns" is a stupid cry,
For, while it may all be so,
I think we'd better be telling the world
That "thorns have roses," you know.

We cannot expect to live our lives
From all that is bitter apart,
And each one knows when he's felt a thorn,
By the pain it has left in his heart.
He doesn't need us to tell him it's there
Or murmur a maxim of woe.
I think we'd better be telling the world
That "thorns have roses," you know.

LIFE

BARBARA SCOVILLE

Life is what you make it,
However, good or bad.
But this depends on how
You take the good and the bad.

Your life may be all gladness,
And I do pray this so,
However, if in sadness,
Let me say it isn't so.

For in your walk throughout the world,
God's treasures you're bound to behold,
And this suffices for all the sadness,
And frees your life from woe.

THE GROVE

GEORGE WOLFFORD

There is a place in every heart that brings back visions of yesterday, a place that one longs to revisit. The particular spot that I like is an oak grove that overlooks the Sandy Valley in Parker County. It is about half a mile from the main road and is reached over a rugged, log trail. Much of the beauty of the land there comes from its unspoiled natural view. I like to come to my favorite seat under the oaks just to the right of the grove. These trees are alone on a cleared hillside and stand strong and tall as though they were overlords of the pines just beneath the cliff. Seated in this little haven of scenery I have memories of what used to be, and such memories may drift through even the younger minds.

I remember the first time that I ever saw the grove. Ramsey took Marcus and me up there and told us a few tall tales about the former visitors and residents of the area. He told us of the early settlers of the region, and of the battles between the pioneers and the Indians. From that time on, whenever Marcus and I worked in Ramsey's tobacco, we would rest there in the shade and drink from the cool spring that trickles out of the hillside. The water is running there yet, but old Ramsey's tobacco patch is now just a field of stubble.

From a vantage point there in the oaks the whole country shows a desolate beauty. As far to the left as the log road, the pines are peeping up over the edge of the cliff. The cliff itself is barren and alone among the greenery of the trees and the grass. The limestone glistens white in the late afternoon sun. On over from the cliff is Ramsey's old tobacco patch. Ramsey hasn't grown any tobacco there for two or three years. He says that he's too old to do the work himself, and since I've gone away and Marcus is dead, there is no one to help him. Marcus was killed in a wreck down at the "Y" winter before last. He was the kind of a fellow that everyone liked. I think about Marcus often, and in my memories he belongs here in the grove.

On up the hill from the stubbled field is the barn and the fence. Since he retired from the tobacco business, Ramsey has been keeping cattle in the barn. He had to put the fence up to keep the cattle from falling over the cliff. It is surprising how many people around here lose cattle that way. There to the right of the barn is the patch that leads up to the old Baker House. Ramsey said that sixty years ago this was the most beautiful home in the valley. The only thing that stands straight now is the sandstone block chimney. Some of those blocks on the bottom of that chimney are three feet cubes. I've often wondered how people built structures like that one without modern tools. Ramsey says that Old Baker had over a hundred slaves, but you can't believe half of what Ramsey says. He's been around this old world too long. He tells sometimes of parties and dances that the Bakers had.

Now, look how the cattle stroll in and out of the back door just as if they had helped design the building. The house has been deserted since the killing around the turn of the century. Another one of Ramsey's tales is that the house has been haunted since one of the Henrys hit Old Baker's son in the head with a poker in a fight over Baker's wife. There is still a big brown bloodstain on the sandstone fireplace inside. No one believes that the place is haunted, but most of the Henrys stay away from here. I saw Marilyn Henry here once when Oakwood church had a picnic. She cried when some of the boys went over to the house to look at the bloodstain. That was the only time I ever saw any of the Henrys at the church picnic.

A well-worn cow path runs from the old house there up to the final point of interest in this end of the valley—the little oak grove itself. There are only seven of the oaks, but they must give off half an acre of shade. The trunks make good chairbacks and places to carve hearts and initials during a church picnic. To make nature's hospitality complete, the water that comes out of the sandstones is the sweetest I've ever tasted. This is undoubtedly a misplaced corner of the Garden of Eden.

Every time I come here I get a dreamy feeling and a sort of longing for the past. Late in the evenings when I am here alone, I see ghosts and shadows, not of Indians or pioneers or of young Baker, but I see tobacco sprouting in the open field. I see the friends of my youth, who will never congregate again. I see Marcus and Old Ramsey coming up the path. No matter how depressing and blue I feel, I'll always like to come here alone and dream.

As Shelley said, "Our sweetest songs are those which tell of saddest thoughts."

DEATH

SHARON BROWN

Death could be good now.
The soft, cold rest
After days of ceaseless living,
Days of happiness and sorrow,
Days of love;
Death could be welcomed now.
Life would be over
With no more tiresome pacing,
No more endless living,
No more competition.
The dead rest.
But death will not come;
Life lingers.
Come, Weary Soul, come back to me;
Death rejects me—
He will not have me now.

THE FAMILY CHORUS

MAVIS CURRY

Along about ten, I jumped with a start,
Goodness! What was that?—
Well, maybe the cat in the cellar just caught a rat.
I listened at the cellar door.
But it was only Aunt Tilda beginning to snore.

Ten-fifteen brought another chord.
Something was walking on loose boards.
No, that wasn't Aunt Tilda's chord.
It was Uncle Henry sawing gourds.

Cousin Suse joined in with a snort and a puff;
Then came Dad with a puff and a ruff.
I heard the hired man give a weeze—;
But what in the world was that?—
Mom added drama wanting a new red hat.

How can I sleep or rest
With the family chorus at its best?
Wake them up in fright?—
No, nothing so unmannered as that—
I'll just join in of course!

SPRING DAWN

JERRY TAYLOR

It's early.
The sun has raised one bright eye above the
Horizon. Wafting gently in the air is the
Scent of dew-drenched violets.
A robin chirps lazily as he awakens.
The sky turns from soft amber to violent
Tangerine, then fades into mauve.
The robin flies into the soft, lavender wind.
Crisp daffodils turn their yellow heads upward.
The sky blazes a golden, rusty-orange
And warms the quiet emerald grass.
The earth awakens.

WHO IS WISE?

RUTHIE PATTERSON

Children playing by the stream
Of babbling rocks and rushing dreams,
Pause and look up as I come by
To ask me why it is I cry.

Mother, running to my side
With words to give my heart a ride,
Stands aghast with a trembling sigh
Reasoning hopelessly why I cry.

Tulips budding in the sun
Untie their formal dress of fun,
Nod silently as I walk by
Without asking why I cry.

TO PART

ANN HELMAN

"Parting such sweet sorrow is."
Sweet to those who've known it not,
For those who have known this so well
Will say that sweet it's not; for those
Who part will know but this until
The loved returns, and then when
Fleeting goes again, will sorrow see.
Here hearts that changed and hardened are.
For parting is a trial that proves
All God's emotions and children,
And those are stronger who have parted then.
Parting sweet? It cannot be,
When parted we must be again,
Till time when we must live again
In present and not future, when
Sad parting once does come again.

LIKE FATHER, LIKE SON

RUDENE RUSSELL

It was five o'clock in the morning when the alarm woke Johnnie. Why did he have to rise so early on a Saturday morning when all college students feel they should sleep late?

From Johnnie's bedroom he could hear his mother rattling pots and pans as she was getting breakfast. He could smell the odor of coffee which made him very hungry.

He dragged himself over to the window and raised the shade. It was a beautiful morning. The sun was rising with all its colors, and the birds had already begun to sing. The green grass across the pasture was wet with dew. Johnnie thought of the times he had run the cows up at night to be milked, the times he had watched his father do the same thing. How he wished his father were alive, and why did the accident have to happen?

As he turned to get dressed, his mother called him for breakfast. He didn't realize he had been standing there so long. He replied, "I'm getting dressed. I'll be right down."

When he was leaving the room, he picked up his shotgun. "It might be a nice day for huntin'," he thought. When he was going down the stairs, his mother stopped in the hall with amazement and just looked. After a few seconds Johnnie said, "Good morning, Mom, isn't this a pretty day?"

"Good morning, John, but whatever are you doing with that gun?"

"Oh, I thought I might go bird hunting today."

"You hurry and get washed for breakfast; I want to talk with you."

As he set his gun in the corner and headed for the bathroom he said,

"Mom, what do you want to talk to me about?"

"You hurry and come on in here."

Something must really be going to take place. Never before had his mother acted like that.

He washed within a few minutes and hurried to the dining room.

"Nothing serious has happened, John. I just wanted you to eat breakfast with me. You look so much like your father. You'll never know how lonesome it is here by myself. It seems sometimes as if the day will never pass."

"You aren't by yourself. May I have another cup of coffee?"

"Surely."

"Mom, I would like to go huntin' today." He was trying to change the subject.

"Well, Johnnie, I guess you are old enough to know what you want. I'll help you get dressed."

As his mother got up from the table, Johnnie looked at her with sorrow. He could see the wrinkles under her eyes.

He finished his coffee and a cigarette and got up. His mother helped him with his jacket and kissed him on the cheek.

He picked up the gun and was walking toward the door when his mother said, "Be careful."

"Okay, Mom, I won't be gone long."

As he was leaving, she stood in the doorway with her eyes misty watching him go down the lane. His father had gone down that lane also, but he never came back.

STRENGTH FOR TOMORROW

BETTY MITCHELL

The day was bright and prophetic
of things coming.
The sun with its stolid promise and
the gentle breezes humming,
Rolling soft hills with their thoughts
and emotions unseen,
All folded into one magnificent and
glorious scene.
But through it all, I somehow was
lonely and sighing
For the love, ambition, and youth
soon to be dying.
For all is slowly fading away
into the past
As each unfulfilled day steals into
yesterday, ever so fast.
I stand, a symbol of man and the
world it seems,
Which fails to reach the peace and
happiness of its dreams.
Dead is yesterday, but I am the
present and forebearer of tomorrow.
Hurry! Hurry! Wake me with work and hope
to shatter the shadows of future sorrow.

SPRING

GENE GOSS

Spring, that Queen of all seasons,
Gives birth to flowers again—
And trees, and birds, and laughter,
And songs of loves of men.

The fragrance of the rose
Takes flight in the vernal breeze;
And the rose gives life to its Maker,
The blood of sweet Adonis.

The smell of fruiting blossom,
The dew upon the field,
The seed of last year's sowing,
Takes life and starts to yield.

The breath of last year's kiss
Still brings a sweet omen
That love will go on living,
That spring will live again,

When life, that fleeting substance,
Falls heavy on my brow,
And love, the life of living,
Shall cease to death to bow.

WATER SNAKES

JERRY TAYLOR

The rivulets of water slither down the window pane
Like crystal snakes.

The drops splash against the glass and flatten out.
Then they swell,

And run together into miniature brooks of clear, cool moisture.
They slide, breakneck, down the pane.

I sit and watch these glassy snakes writhe in death agonies.
Soon, they are gone.

I wonder what becomes of them.

GEMS

ANN HELMAN

For these few moments slipping fast away
Are now as gems, and gems will ever be.
For gems don't die; they're here forever more
As just to us our love will always be.

Gems of happy ruby-red,
The sadness of the blue,
The solitude so loved, as pearls;
The bright, white light that say's we're true.

A gem for every mood and thought
To sparkle in our soul as real,
As though they really here do dwell.
Dream gems are these, not real.

ACTION

ROGER STEPHENS

The whining wind shocked the trees with sudden bursts,
The whole earth seemed haunted with green shadows.
Cows bawled with low stricken moans, and
Chickens let out occasional, nervous laughter.
Birds huddled around their sacred nests,
While shiftless snails feared to crawl.
Even crickets were silent and whippoorwills feared to trill.

Adam walked across the earth without thinking
And Eve brushed her hair needlessly.
Only the dogs howled with any sincerity,
Because of the absence of felines and rats.
The buzzards waited in swirling expectation
While their young rattled hungrily on.
Mickey Mouse pranced in the local theatre opposite Minnie.

All for what?

AD ASTRA

MARY MCCALL

I long to indite. So ardently do I wish and hope that tears appear in my eyes at the very thought of it.

I do not have the time to pursue my wish. Each day is already so filled that it is difficult to accomplish the necessities. I can foresee no relief; my schedule becomes more crowded. I plod on miserably, wishes unfulfilled.

I am exuberant with inspirations; they spring forth daily. They are sundry: topics such as ethics, morals, religion, friendship, people, and college life all course through this brain of mine.

Yet I remain sitting with some textbook in my hand and preparing the next day's assignment, while all the time I am longing to take up my pen and write. Thoughts flash through my mind and are gone; I sit thinking on issues and characters. My textbook lies neglected, but I do not write.

I dream of vivifying some actual character; I look forward to the day when I shall tell my story, the day when I shall be understood through my own words.

I face a decision: which is more important, studious absorption of knowledge or a newly written poem or essay? Each day I battle with myself. I say, "You cannot write well without experience." My conscience echoes back, "Neither can you be a good student without thorough study." Yes, we—my conscience and I—are both right, but the perpetual dilemma continues.

Yet by writing this I have reached a decision: I do not really accomplish anything by merely thinking on some inspiration. Before me lies a neglected textbook; next to my pen is a blank sheet of paper glaring at me, daring me to write. While I am trying to convince myself that I should be studying, my inspiration fades away. I am remorseful because I did not write. I have gained nothing and have wasted my time.

There is no reason why I should not write when I feel the urge to do so. Inspirations are valuable but short lived; they do not perpetuate themselves. Books are always available; I can study them whenever I please, but inspirations become stale and lose their vividness.

Writing is no easy task. I must have an ideal to present or something to say. Even then it is not so easy as it seems. There is that time of feverish anxiety when getting my thought down on paper is the important thing. Then follows reflection and revision. "Did I really mean this?" "Is that what I intended to say?" "Can it be more aptly and logically constructed?" I read somewhere that it is good to lay one's writing aside for a period of time and come back to it later when one is better able to be more self-critical and analytical. It is good to revise until what has been written is so compact that to change one word would change the whole thought. It is finished then, and only then.

The feeling of knowing that I have created something new and worthwhile is a pleasant reward. I gain a certain passive satisfaction from writing. The time and effort are well spent.

I will continue to write when I have an inspiration or when I have something I want to say. My textbook may lie neglected but only for an hour or two. Studious absorption of knowledge is only a means of education; writing is an education!

LEST I SHALL FORGET

CHARLES GRIGSBY

The memories of those nights,
Beautiful nights,
Nights we were together,
Are in my heart on Towering Heights,
A love lives there forever.

How I remember the touch of your lips,
Your caresses so tenderly,
For your love my soul sadly sips
From this radiant Memory.

Why did you leave me,
Leave me standing there?
Your exit came with a cool breeze,
Dancing softly through your golden hair.

Your eyes were in resemblance
With stars high in the skies,
There in the dark of nothing,
My soul surely lies.

As I sit here with slumped shoulders,
Head bending—bowing low,
Not knowing where to turn . . .
Not knowing where to go,
I tell you of this love,
'Twas mine—surely I shall admit,
So I'll cherish these words forever,
—Lest I shall forget.

MINE

RAY E. WILLIAMS

Oh, the morning comes so early,
Drawing me from fitful dreaming
Of a love so dearly meaning, seeming all my own.

The fragrance of air enfolds me,
From the gaiety of one evening
Of a love so dearly meaning, seeming all my own.

Awaking, find your heart is broken
Shattered and torn and sorely bleeding
From a love so dearly meaning, seeming all your own.

Death is but an instant,
A broken heart is ever beating
For a love so dearly meaning, seeming all your own.

It would be a wise decision
To destroy your heart's own feeling
Of a love so dearly meaning, seeming all your own.

But to destroy is a sin;
Go on, remember every feeling
Of a love so dearly meaning, seeming all your own.

AUTUMN

MARY MCCALL

Autumn is coming.
The mornings are cold.
Here and there sunlight flickers
Through to the leaves on the trees.
A hardy gust of wind blows;
Leaves come floating down, down to the ground.
They rustle under my feet.
I stoop to pick one up and examine it.
Its veins form a beautiful, graceful pattern.
I crease it down the middle;
Its sides touch in symmetry.
A swift breeze carries it from my hand.
It glides down to the ground,
And becomes one of the many leaves absorbing the sunlight there.

As I begin to walk, I notice that the sun is brighter now.
For the first time I realize that the rays of the sun are warm on my back.
Turning, I shade my eyes from the sun with my hand
And peer at it a few minutes.
I wonder and marvel at its beauty
And try to imagine the extent of its power.
I can hardly fancy that
An object so remote can so profoundly influence my life.

Yet a month from now this sun will not shine brightly.
I shall not feel its warm rays on my back.
Harsh winds will tug at me,
And I shall gaze longingly for the sun,
Eager for its warmth and friendliness.
For a moment I imagine the sun sinks from sight.
I feel myself driven by the cold, piercing winter winds.
But it is Autumn;
I will not think of Winter.
The sun emerges, flickering again through the leaves.

In a distant field I espy shocked corn stalks,
Their dull, drab hue pervades my soul.
I avert my eyes, seeking a gay, colorful scene.

Now I discern a garden; the vegetables have been gathered,
And weeds have taken their places.
But the pumpkins still remain on the vines.
Never was their golden, orange color more beautiful.

Now the sun is sinking in the west;
The leaves on the trees blow gently and slowly in autumn's breeze,
As peaceful and graceful as the soft waves of the sea.
Deep, dark shadows begin to loom everywhere.
Twilight broadcasts that day is drawing to an end and night is coming.
A long amorphous ribbon of intermingled yellow
Fills the sky until it becomes alive with color.

Back of it all the sun, fiery orange, magnified,
Descends lower and lower from sight.
Everything seems gone.
A chilling night breeze sweeps over the land.

RUNNERUP

BETTY GIBSON

Somehow it had happened again. Lucy had seen Dave with another girl. Flopping into a chair and flinging her books on the bed, Lucy stared out of the window with unseeing eyes. Still, if one had examined those eyes closely, one would have detected an expression of hurt bewilderment rising to the surface, like a pin which had pricked a tiny hole in a balloon, thereby letting the air escape slowly. It wasn't just Dave alone; it was a life-long pattern, that of being second best, or just never quite good enough. Like an ocean wave unexpectedly smacking her in the face, remembrances of former years engulfed her with their relentless pattern.

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A little seven-year-old, nervous, big-eyed second-grader, Lucy, dotted an "i" and stood up.

"A perfect lesson," she remarked smugly to herself. "I'll beat Sue Moore today and have a reading lesson back without a mark on it. I'll show her."

The other children in line glanced at Lucy curiously. Her thin knees wobbled, she gulped nervously several times, and little rivulets of sweat ran off her clutched hands onto the neat paper.

"Next," called the teacher.

Lucy handed the paper to Miss Hansen wordlessly, with sanguine hope and apprehension flickering across her small face. Sue had been in front of Lucy, and Lucy had strained her neck to see that big "100" at the top of Sue's paper.

"Write in more complete sentences, however," the teacher had said, smiling at Sue.

"I'm sorry, Lucy, but wheel is spelled w-h-e-e-l, not w-e-e-l. You'll have a perfect reading lesson next time, I know."

Catching Sue's impudent, triumphant, and smug glance, Lucy wanted to cry, scream, and kick. But with perfect composure she went to her seat, proudly quelling the babyish impulses.

Next year, the third grade was divided: the fast ones to one group, the slow ones to another. Lucy was left behind in the slow group, and tears welled up in her big, appealing, chocolate-ball eyes as she watched the fast group march out, Sue among them, grinning back at Lucy maliciously. Why? Why? Why?

"I'm not dumb. I know I'm not," she thought tremulously. In fact, she had once walked by the principal's office and had seen her mother talking to the principal. Apparently, they were in the midst of a deeply engrossing conversation because the small eavesdropped just outside the door frame went unnoticed.

"Your Lucy is mentally able to make the best grades in school; in fact, she possesses a brilliant mind. But I just can't understand it, an inhibition, perhaps . . ."

Lucy fled quickly like a dog with its tail tucked between its legs.

Valentine's Day in the fifth grade was still a big day, though the children were ten or eleven years old. A tacit understanding permeated the fiercely competitive classroom that the child who received the greatest number of valentines would be selected as the most popular person of the room. Sue Moore's desk was heaped with thirty-seven valentines, one from every child in the room. Lucy didn't fail to notice this because, though she had received many, they were not enough to separate her from the pack. "Second best again," she thought.

That summer Lucy was sent to a day camp. Sports had never interested her much, but at least she learned to play golf—a form of it, that is. In the playoff tournament she was runner-up. The tennis tournament found her second also; the swimming race was a tie with another girl. The following year, as runner-up in the archery match, she stolidly lugged home another second-place medal.

"You seem to be the runner-up-kid," her brother laughingly but innocently remarked.

"The pattern was set then," she thought, as she curled one foot under herself in the chair.

Then there was that time in the ninth grade when she had wanted so desperately to be in the last play of the year. Her home-room teacher read off the cast. As each name was called her eyes got bigger, her knees turned to water, and her breath came in spasmodic gasps, as she leaned forward infinitesimally. Finally as the list was completed and Lucy with a trembling sigh slumped back into her seat, she caught Sue's narrowed eyes upon her in a half-pitying, half-derisive stare. Sue, of course, had received the favored part.

Report card day came. Lucy sat unconcernedly with both hands propped under her chin.

"Here, Lucy . . ."

As she noted the marks on that all-important piece of blue paper, her eyes rattled around their sockets like two peas in a foot-long pod. All A's! An electric shock of pride and elation stiffened her spine, causing her to turn slowly around with a self-satisfied smile and let the other classmates know of her good fortune.

But from the excited, shrill treble and the hoarse bass of triumphant voices Lucy knew that she was *not alone* in her wonderful feeling; she was part of a *crowd*. She turned away, wordlessly . . .

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College had not helped. In fact, it had accentuated the problem. She was still never first, only second; and sometimes not even that.

Then Dave had appeared, as if from nowhere, blasting his way into Lucy's misty, shadowy world of nothingness.

"How about a coke?"

"Love to."

So, for a while, she had floated along on the pink cloud of "Most desired one"—until today, that is . . .

When the buzzer sounded, slicing through her reverie like a hot knife through butter, Lucy was wafted on wings of expectation to the telephone . . .

Dressing for her date with Dave that night she paused, comb in midair.

"Hmm . . . I wonder if I was the first girl he called or only the second?"

LONELINESS

BARBARA SCOVILLE

You've robbed me of the lust in me.

You've taken my only smile.

You've left me here alone to wait for you all the while.

It's not so strange I miss you,

And it's not because I'm all alone;

It's just because you've taken with you

The lust of which I own.

You can keep my heart,

You can have my soul,

But they must be united.

As you have the one, I cannot live without you, divided.

Come back, my love,

Come back, come back.

Before my life has subsided,

And we will be together dear, forever united.

A YELLOW ROSE

CHARLES GRIGSBY

A yellow rose with seeds all flung
Across a barren plain,
Each seed a symbol of tears I've shed,
Each tear I've shed in vain.

Oh! But to see the yellow rose,
A sight beyond compare,
To whiff its pleasant fragrance,
And smell the sweetened air.

To kiss its petals gently,
And hold with ultimate pride,
And watch when the day is darkened,
Where the pollens safely hide.

Too good to be true this happiness,
As my joy had come to a close.
Oh! wishful was I that together we'd be.
Just me and my yellow rose.

The spring changed to summer,
And the summer oozed slowly to fall,
And from out of fall came the winter,
A plant's life merciless stall.

A yellow rose trying to touch the sky,
Gasping for one warm ray of light,
Struggled with an optimistic urge,
And reached with all its might.
And with a shudder of defeat,
The rose wilted on the birth of night,
And the petals loosened from the bud
And drifted slowly out of sight.

And the seeds that were left behind
Were thrown by the mighty winds
To a plain deserted, as a winter tree,
To the edge where the world begins.

And the seeds thereof were scattered far;
Some north, some east, some west,
And even some were scattered,
Beside the grave in which I rest.

And on my grave there grows,
Why? (Only the Almighty knows),
The roots there grow into my heart,
My heart's desire, my yellow rose.

A yellow rose with seeds all flung
Across a barren plain,
Each seed a symbol of tears I've shed,
Each tear was not in vain.

VICTIM OF THE POWERFUL

LOUISE GULLADY

The street was quiet just before the dawn; nothing was stirring but the bright, golden brown leaves which had not yet drifted to the ground. Flitting from tree to tree was a pair of industrious, vigorous starlings that had not joined the southward moving throng of blackness which had been gliding along overhead for many days.

Steve Paine stepped out into the damp, sweet, penetrating air of the late October morning with little thought of anything but the splendor of the day as the sun began to brighten above the trees and rooftops.

As he walked the shower-moistened grass to the sidewalk, he stopped to gaze at the squirrels frisking on the piles of leaves he had raked into mounds the previous day. He chuckled at the havoc they were creating of the once neat, unstrewn lawn; then strode on to the sidewalk that led up town.

Diminutive lakes had formed in the hollows close by the walk during the downpour which had preceded the dawn. The water-soaked ground had given up many wire-like earthworms which had crawled onto the pavement searching for safety, only to be trampled by clumsy adults or mischievous, curious, and sometimes cruel children. The harmless victims of the powerful.

Steve breathed deeply of the brisk, fresh air. He stopped only now and then to observe, to touch, or to smell the objects of beauty that lined his path through the park and into the town.

He stopped only once to talk to anyone. That was when old Mrs. Bowers came out onto her porch to speak to the young man who always took time to pause and chat with her and tell her how beautiful her petunias were or how nice she looked in her new hat. He always noticed.

There was happiness in his heart and beauty in his soul. Later no one could think of any time when he had ever been cruel or unkind. His words were always praise; his thoughts sincere; his footsteps determined; and his mind, clear of rubbish, and a receptacle for the useful and the good. "He was not *too* nice; not *too* perfect; not *too* flattering. He was loved." These were the things said of him during the days following the incident.

Little Charlie had gone flying into the street to retrieve the ball that he had been bouncing monotonously on the sidewalk while his father backed the car from the garage to take him to school. The man wasn't aware that anyone was in his path until he felt the sickening thud of steel on flesh. But he hadn't hit his son. Charlie was safely sprawled on the lawn where he had been pushed by the alert, agile Steve. The tragedy was that there had been only time for one body to be thrust to safety.

Later two elderly ladies could be overheard talking in lowered tones. "It's too bad—he was so young—he had his life before him."

"No, his life was full, as full as another fifty years could have made it. He knew beauty, he had compassion—he said—my hat was pretty."

BELCH OF THE PAST

ROGER STEPHENS

My last drink from the old cup.

In years gone by I kept that old symbol of lost hope;

I clung to a virtue turned into a curse.

I washed and the water changed into dirt.

The blood remained on a blemished hand.

A wicked heart stayed in emotional stress.

A breast heaved though the air was fresh.

The stars glittered only for the happy men.

The last drop tasted as bad as the first.

NEVER

DONNA MINCEY

Never look into a pair of blue eyes,
And meet the smile within,
Never answer to their calling,
For that would surely be a sin.

Never run a laughing
In the fields on a summer night,
Never with fair hair beside you,
Fair hair shining in the moonlight.

Never go a-flying
Swooping from a height—
Never imitate a firefly,
Lest you be extinguished like their light.

Never take a lover's hand,
And skip off happily into the field;
Never fly away together,
For then your fate is sealed.

Never let a sweetheart
Lead you off by the hand,
Never run again as children
Playing in a moonlit land.

These are the things elders
Will advise to you,
But I tell you only
Do what your heart tells you to.

Always take your lover's hand,
Always smile at him,
And if he fails to stay with you,
Still you'll smile again.

MY SISTER SAW A WITCH

MARY KATHERINE NOLAN

I cannot remember when I first saw the queer old lady of our valley. However, I remember vividly the first time my sister saw her.

The summer shower was over. The trees, the grass, and the mountains looked like emeralds. A glance at the sun told me that it was late and that I must hurry. Leaving my sister to play beside a fresh, shallow stream of water, I went to the orchard to gather June apples for a pie. Having filled my bucket, I stood for a moment and listened to the frogs croaking along the bank of the lazy creek. Then I moved on.

Suddenly a blood-curdling scream stopped me momentarily in my tracks and engulfed me in a wave of fear. I did not think there were snakes around this time of year.

Gaining command of my feet, I dropped the bucket and bolted across the orchard in the direction of the stream, where I had left my small sister.

In a worn path above the trickling stream of water, she stood as if petrified, her eyes blued to the slight figure trudging up the mountain road. Shaking her gently, I asked, "What's wrong?"

"A witch! A witch!" she cried.

Then I turned to look at the queer old lady moving slowly up the road and understood how a child could easily imagine the woman to be a witch.

Her manner of dress was a frequent topic of discussion among the village women. Today she presented a surprising likeness to the weird pictures of witches which we associate with Hallowe'en. The soft, summer wind caught the wide brim of her tattered, black hat and sent it flapping like wings of a bat in flight. Her ankle-length, dark, ragged coat whirled and then soared out behind. The weight of the load which she carried caused her to hunch forward.

With faltering steps she moved on and suddenly disappeared behind tall pine trees.

Then my sister stopped her loud protesting. Half of the neighborhood had, by this time, collected to see who had been murdered. Red-faced, I explained the situation and with a chuckle each went his own way.

Relieved, but embarrassed and a little angry, I took my sister's hand and silently we marched toward the house.

"Mad at me, Sissie?" she inquired, looking earnestly up into my face.

"No, Jamie, but did you have to scream like a little wildcat?"

She looked at her feet for a minute; then looking very serious, replied, "Well, next time, Sissie, I'll try to scream just a little bit."

TEARDROPS ON THE WIND

DONNA MINCEY

My cabin is empty,
Dust lies on the floor,
My flower is a rank weed,
Crossed with a dusty spore,
And by one rusty hinge
Is sagging my door.

My garden of flowers,
Roses, pansies, and columbine,
Are scraggly and choked
By the morning glory vine,
And bear no resemblance
To what used to be mine.

My sweet little bird
That sang in its cage
Is gone to the sunset,
A withered heap, like my Bible page,
That is cracked and yellowed
And crumbles with age.

My stove is pieces
Covered with red
That comes of age.
The termites have eaten my bed,
And the cabin is tumbled,
With no place for a weary head.

My books are dusty
And covered with pollen,
So they still lie
Where they have fallen
Since I went from my hill,
To sleep in the valley below,
And all in the sunset is still.

NIGHT STORM

JERRY TAYLOR

It is night—a stormy night.

The house, buried alive among the trees, sits melancholily on its dank foundation. The door, weatherbeaten and paintstreaked, gapes open in a death yawn. Broken-paned windows and a crumbling chimney add to the all-over death pallor of the scene.

Ancient tree druids dance their ritual of death in the screaming wind while the darkening shadows turn the hollow trunks into living ghouls. A bolt of lightning streaks across the sky, piercing the blackness with unholy light. The thunder ghost clanks his heavy chains across the grave-dark sky.

Thick drops of clammy liquid beat down upon the collapsing roof. Another shaft of blazing, white heat hurtles through the sky. One of the black druids cracks in pain and topples to the ground, while the thunder beats its death drums above. The body lies surrounded by its mates, with the dripping rain thudding unceasingly on its unfeeling hulk. The wind, howling its grief cry into the night, surges with mingled emotions. As it passes through the jagged glass tooth of an upstairs window, the cry of the wind becomes a living shriek that screams "terror" through the rooms.

Violently, the storm rages on—with relentless energy—into its own death throes. Pitching the rain into every corner of each musty, tomblike room, it sends spasms of lightning periodically among the writhing ghostly druids. In one last concerted effort, the storm crashes a shaft of brittle lightning directly into the dejected house and the thunder rumbles ominously just above the swaybacked roof.

Suddenly, the violence ends and the storm settles into a whisper. The pounding rain subsides into a breathless mist as the thunder and lightning cower behind the clouds. The tree spectres, so frightening in the black storm, now wave their bare arms gently in a rocking, crooning lullaby.

The wet, broken windows of the shadowy house blink with the reflection of the rising sun and the creaking door floats open in an early-rising yawn.

The storm is over.

It is day.

MY COMPANION

MAVIS CURRY

My companion and I paused beside the decaying mailbox and looked behind us at the long narrow dusty road over which we had come. Long, irregular, snake-like lines darkened the dust in the road as gnarled and stalwart trees began to cast their pale shadows. While we rested, my companion sat with his head in his hands and aimlessly looked at his feet. His matted, black, and graying hair came almost to his collar. Dark half-moons were under his eyes, and extended lines ran through his face. His black coat, that hung loosely about him, was traced with green mold.

"Amos Seems," I said, reaching up and running my fingers over the name on the wooden mailbox.

I looked about for some other evidence of human existence, and my eyes descended the steep slope down into a hollow, across a small meandering stream, where a small white house was set back among the bushes.

The sudden darkening of the sky and furiousness of wind in the trees made me look at the sky. I turned to my silent companion.

"A storm's coming. We'd better go down there and see if we can get shelter for the night," I said.

He got slowly to his feet.

When we were about halfway down the slope, the wailing of a child came from the direction of the house.

"That child must really be angry," I remarked, attempting to laugh, knowing all along that it was the wind causing the wail.

After we crossed the stream, I noticed my companion's steps were slower. He did not seem to be in any hurry to get into the shelter of the house.

The path which led up to the house was overgrown with hanging weeds, which pulled and tugged at our legs. The house had an unkempt appearance and the windows seemed to be sightless eyes staring blankly at us. The steps creaked under our feet and the porch howled a protest as we walked to the door. I raised my hand to knock on the door but stopped short as my companion spoke.

"There's no need to knock. It's empty."

Something in his voice made my hand tremble on the door knob. Suddenly, the door creaked on its hinges and opened.

The room before us was empty except for two chairs by the fireplace and a broken-down table standing in one corner.

We stepped inside. The wind blew the door shut behind us. On the outside the rain began to pound down and cold wind seeped around us from the cracks in the floor. I broke up the table and built a fire. All the time I noticed that my companion was watching me strangely. His eyes seemed to burn in his head. He probably thinks that I'm not very sociable after traveling with him all day and not even asking his name or telling him mine, I thought and turned to him.

"Looks like we're here for the night," I said.

He didn't reply.

"What did you say your name was?" I asked.

Still no reply. Outside the lightning flashed and pieces of broken sticks and leaves hit the house. I looked toward the window and saw wet leaves sticking to the panes.

"I'm a salesman," I said. "I've started back to the county seat to order a new supply of materials. This seems to be a good community for a salesman." Seeing he wasn't even listening to me, I asked, "Wonder what the people were like who lived here? Did you know them by any chance?"

"Amos Seems was a kindly man, but he stayed much to himself. Not many people liked him. His wife left him because he couldn't buy the things she wanted. He's been dead for a long time. He's buried up there in the cemetery where I got with you," he said.

"I could have sworn that I heard a child cry as we were coming down the slope," I said, feeling better that my companion had decided to talk.

"Ten years ago tonight Amos's wife killed their child. Folks say that you can hear it cry in the evening on every anniversary of its death. I've come here every year to see if I can hear it, but I never have," he said.

I pulled a chair to the fire and sat watching the fire crack and burn. I noticed my companion had fallen asleep. The rain still pounded on the roof.

I didn't believe in haunted houses. During all the years that I had been a traveling salesman, I'd heard tales of the supernatural but never gave any thought to them. From pure exhaustion, I dozed in my chair and kept thinking about haunted houses and my companion who was sleeping soundly beside me.

When I awoke my neck was stiff, which told me I had slept a long time. I looked over at my companion, but he wasn't in the chair. I stood up and looked around the room, but he was nowhere around.

I could still hear the rain on the roof, almost silent now, like a thousand whispering, unclear voices. The night was beginning to fade into a gray morning. I called out but received no answer. I went to the next room but stopped short in the doorway. Lying on a broken-down bed was a skeleton of a small child. Folded carefully at its feet was a black coat—the coat of my companion. On the floor at the foot of the bed there was something written in the dust. By the dim light from the window I read the word—it was "AMOS."

I turned and ran out of the house, where a gray and foggy morning enveloped me.

FEAR

GEORGE WOLFFORD

Go underground
With the snakes and the rats and the dead.
Be frightened.
Everyone else is frightened the first time that he
goes down alone,
Hearing only the silence, feeling the dampness of the
mine, sensing non-existent beings all around
him.
First you must get used to the feeling,
Then you can dig coal.

SEPTEMBER

SHARON BROWN

The loveliness of September has come.
There is a touch of frost in early mornings,
A melody in the air,
A schoolday,
A football game,
Hot chocolate in the early mornings,
An autumn love.
September.

PUGNAVISSE

ROGER STEPHENS

"To have fought," the phrase runs,
The regrets of a man with empty guns.
"To have won," the line tells
The sorrow of a man who wasted his shells.
Such a joke to have fought,
A bigger joke to have lost.
Yet the man who won
Will forever grip a gun.

LOVE

RAY E. WILLIAMS

Love is a brutal thing not to be bought or sold,
Love is sweet, love is bitter,
Love is good, love is bad,
Love can never find a cure,
Love's a demon all its own.
Love—the will and inspiration,
Love—the will for life,
Love—the will for heights attained,
Love—the will and cause of birth,
Why love, the will and wish for death?

LIKE DREAMS

BETTY WHITE

The dreamer wakes and sees the dawn,
but all too soon the dawn is gone
like his dream.

Our senses wake and feel the light,
but gone is the struggle for the right
like a dream.

Life is a series of hopes and dreams;
it makes us aware of its subtle schemes
which are blown away.

We live but an hour in the indefinite plan;
then like schemes, dreams, water and sand,
we are blown away.

BESIDE THE SEA

BETTY OGDEN

I stood beside the ocean
And looked into the sea,
And lo, as far as I could look
The waters lay before me.
There I saw the rolling waters
And waves of ocean spray;
There I saw the ocean
With its glory and array.
Then I fell to my knees
And threw my arms to the sea,
And cried,
"What beside a being so great as this
Are little people like you and me?"

VISION

RAY E. WILLIAMS

In a gay and glowing manner,
I saw her standing in Enchanting Manor;
A well of joy before me flowed
As her face alighted and glowed;
How gaily bright her dark eyes shone
In my thoughts, I was alone.

Immediately I placed her upon a golden altar
To worship her and never falter;
Standing tiptoe to set her higher,
Down she came rushing, crushing
Out the infant life for evermore.

